



BOOK REVIEW

Life After Medical School, by *Leonard Laster, MD* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton Company, 1996).

This book is a fascinating, at times gripping work, which presents the reader with the stories told by 32 physicians about their careers and how they made their career choices. The reader is frequently offered insights and understanding as to how these physicians made the important personal and professional decisions that shaped their careers.

The author, a distinguished psychiatrist and medical administrator, has skillfully shaped his interviews with subjects who represent the career diversity that exists in today's medical world. Both generalists and specialists in surgery, medicine, and pediatrics have been interviewed; they include a CEO of a large pharmaceutical company, an editor, a former surgeon general, and a foundation president. Seven physicians discuss the practice of medicine, while academia is discussed by 25. The emphasis on academia is understandable: the author accomplished two-thirds of his interviews with faculty while he was president of the Oregon Health Sciences University and chancellor of the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Five women and three minority physicians are among those interviewed.

In general, the author has grouped his subjects by discipline. The groups include training directors, physicians whose careers affected national policy, and physicians whose careers included major obstacles and setbacks. Dr. Laster offers a commentary throughout, but succeeds most with his interviews, because what emerges from Dr. Laster's skillful interviewing is the richness and diversity of medical careers. Personal adversity, talent, and luck, as well as gender and racial prejudice, are here. Being sued and struggling with personal illness are present. In a world filled with ever-changing career expectations, almost all of the subjects report a love for what they do and would do it over again, offering to the reader a sense of work security remarkable in today's work world.

According to the author, the book is intended for medical students, but I believe that anyone interested in medicine as a career, or who is well along in medicine, will find the book valuable reading.

JOEL J. ALPERT, M.D.
PROFESSOR OF PEDIATRICS AND PUBLIC HEALTH
BOSTON UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
818 HARRISON STREET
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02118